COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP FOR THE DESIGN OF AN EMIS FOR AFGHAN NGOs

DAY	SESSION	TIME	TOPIC
Thursday 22 June	1	9-10.30am	• Identify the standard reports to be produced by the system including content, format, medium, frequency, responsibility and distribution
		10.30-11am	Morning Tea
	2	11-12.30	• Having regard to the system objectives and the agreed indicator set identify the GIS functions and facilities needed: eg. school point location data, school catchment boundaries, use of GIS for micro planning, production of thematic maps showing distributions such as NER and GER
		12.30-1.30pm	Lunch
	3	1.30-3pm	• Discussion of possible arrangements and procedures for aggregating databases of individual NGOs into an education sector, centralised database
		3-3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
	4	3.30-5pm	• Discussion and reflection on understandings and emerging agreement on the content, structure, functions and facilities of a core EMIS meeting the needs of individual NGOs and capable of being aggregated into an education sector centralised system.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief summary of an EMIS Design Workshop held in Islamabad from 18 to 21 June, 2001 under the auspices of the Education Working Group (EWG) of ACBAR. The workshop was a component of the Terms of Reference covered by UNICEF Special Services Agreements (SSAs) numbered SSA/AFGP/2001/00000825-0 and SSA/AFGP/2001/00000826-0. These agreements provide for the consultants to conduct an EMIS workshop followed by the preparation of draft and final systems specifications for a common, computer-based EMIS that would meet the core needs of UNICEF and NGOs providing education services in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Participants

Twenty five representatives from seventeen NGOs and UNICEF attended the workshop (Appendix 1). Collectively the NGOs provide education services to approximately 470,000 children, (33% of whom are female), employ 15,500 teachers (26% are female) and operate more than 2050 schools and or school related facilities (Appendix 2). As the EFA 2000 Assessment Report on Afghanistan estimated that about 10 to 15% of primary school-aged children are enrolled in institutions offering basic and primary education, it is clear that the NGOs represented at the workshop are collectively the major providers of basic and primary education to Afghan children. This emphasises the importance of the workshop in terms of laying the foundation for the development of an EMIS that might, one day, cover all education providers, including the government, in Afghanistan.

In the main, the participants were either education officers or administrative staff specializing in EMIS or EMIS related activities. All had an extensive background in various aspects of education and brought a wealth of knowledge and experience that contributed greatly to all aspects of the workshop, particularly enhancing its participatory nature.

Objectives of Workshop

The objectives of the four-day workshop were as follows:

- Days 1 and 2 – Using a hands-on approach, to build and enhance a conceptual understanding of EMIS using training software.

- Days 3 and 4 – Using a participatory approach, to commence the process of building a specification for an EMIS that will meet the core requirements of the Afghan NGO sector, and in the future those of all Afghan providers of education services.

- The specification should identify and define all categories and elements of data required for a range of reports needed by a diverse group of users and provide the indicators needed for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Workshop Schedule

The schedule for the workshop is attached as Appendix 3. The sequence set out in the schedule for the first two days was generally adhered to. However, such good progress was made in those two days that it was decided to use a small group approach to exploring the topics set out in the schedule for the second two days rather than cover all of that material in plenary session. Consequently, small groups were established to cover the following elements of an EMIS:

- students;
- schools;
- teachers;
- finance; and
- resources and learning achievement

The consultants moved from group to group facilitating discussion and debate. The small groups reported their recommendations to plenary sessions. Those sessions were marked by robust discussion and debate that led to agreement on major issues.

What has been achieved?

The workshop was undoubtedly successful in developing a better understanding of EMIS concepts including:

- the specification and use of education indicators at different levels in the education sector;
- the data needed for compilation of those indicators;
- the range of reports required by different levels and types of education managers, planners and policy analysts and others involved in the production and delivery of education services;
- the data needed for compilation of those reports;
- the facilities needed for ad hoc information retrieval by users; and
- the importance of a consistent user interface that is easy to learn and easy to use.

Using the training system software enhanced participants' understanding of these concepts. The workshop made very substantial progress toward:

- identifying all of the data that need to be collected, entered and validated for the compilation of indicators and the production of reports;

- specifying the content, frequency and distribution of the reports that should be produced by the EMIS.

Moreover, the participatory process consolidated participants' understanding of EMIS concepts built in the first two days of the workshop. In this regard, participants voiced their opinion that the use of the EMIS training system software was a most effective way of building and enhancing EMIS concepts. Interestingly, both those who had prior EMIS experience and those with no EMIS experience and little familiarity with computing expressed this view.

Debriefing

Following the workshop, on 22nd June, 2001 a debriefing session was held in Islamabad for management representatives of UNICEF Afghanistan and the NGOs. Additionally, all but one of the workshop participants also attended the debriefing session.

The debriefing session gave rise to interesting discussion that emphatically gave support to the continuation of the EWG's EMIS initiative. In this respect, there appeared to be an emerging consensus that UNICEF Afghanistan would be an appropriate organization to assume, in the future, the responsibility of collecting education data in electronic format from the EMISs of contributing NGOs, to form a centralised database that would offer a comprehensive view of basic and primary education in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Future Action

The next steps in taking the EMIS initiative further are as follows:

- development of a data dictionary – end July;
- production of a draft specification of an EMIS – end August; and
- production of a final specification – end September.

The production of a data dictionary will involve continuing participation by the small groups established during the workshop. Each such group has accepted responsibility for providing data dictionary entries within their domain of interest. For example, the small group that worked on the data entry and reporting of student related information will provide dictionary entries for all attributes of students. For example, they will provide definitions for categories of student such as "repeaters" and "dropouts". Similarly, the small group responsible for school data entry and reporting will provide definitions for various categories of schools. These data dictionary contributions are essential to the success of the initiative as adherence by all NGOs to the use of these definitions in their EMISs is a pre-requisite for aggregating data so as to form a centralised database.

It was evident to all participants that the timetable mentioned above is very tight and that any delay in meeting earlier deadlines would adversely affect achievement of a final agreed specification by end September, 2001.

Issues Emerging

An area of EMIS development that stimulated protracted discussion and debate concerned recording and reporting of students' learning achievement. This discussion highlighted the following:

- for all grades individual schools set examinations;
- they are marked by the teachers;
- there are no moderation procedures to compensate for differential levels of examination difficulty and variations among examiner's marking criteria;
- hence, comparisons between schools or within schools from year to year are extremely difficult, if not impossible,.to interpret.

These problems are well known and they have begun to be addressed by the development of basic learning competencies by the EWG, UNICEF and by individual NGOs. Having regard to this, the workshop resolved to recommend that the Education Working Group take up the issue of the introduction of standardised, competency-based assessment of learning achievement in primary schooling as a matter of high priority.

Summary

By any measure the workshop was a marked success and much of this was due to the knowledge, experience, enthusiasm and strong commitment that all participants brought to the initiative. Additionally, UNICEF's organizational arrangements contributed greatly to the smooth running of the workshop and, in this regard, Best Western, Islamabad, should be thanked for providing excellent amenities.

The consultants would like to express their gratitude to all concerned in making the workshop a success, and in this respect they, and the participants, are indebted Ellen Kalmthout and her staff.

Appendix 1: List of Participants and their Agencies

Mr. Amir Mohammad	Dept Chief Technical Advisor	SCA
Mr. Hussain Hasseb	Education CoOordinator	NAC
Mr. Shafequellah Weera	Computer and Communication Co-ordinator	NAC
A. Wakil Hanifi	Comm. Based. Education Project Manager	CDAP
Mr. Shal Wali	Personnel Programme Manager	OXFAM
Mr. M. Ali Haideri	Programme Manager	PSD
Mr. Najeebullah	Office-in Charge	AFBAS-ED
Mr. A. Wafi Walim	Education Programme Officer	AGBasEd
Dr. Aminullah Amin	Project Manager-Education	SC-US Queeta
Ms. Sara Heras	Team Supervisor	IRC/FEP
Ms. Wahida	Programme Assistant	IRC/FEP
Mr. Fazalyar		IRC
Mr. M. Rehan A.	Co-ordinator MIS	GTZ-BEFARe
Mr. M. Nasim Q	Co-ordinator Protection/Pub.	GTZ-BEFARe
Mr. Waleed Hakim	Project Administrator Officer	CARE
Mr. Wahaj	Education Manager	OI
Ms. Zakia Nazari	Academic Advisor	AIL
Mr. Amanullah H.	Resource Team/Comm./Dev. Manager	IRC
Dr. Garfoori	Kabul	UNICEF
Mr. Wahidi	Jalalabad	UNICEF
Mr. Azizi	Mazar	UNICEF
Mr. Musa Naheeb	Herat	UNICEF
Mr. S. Hashmatullah	Sayedi	IR-CFDO
Mr. Rahmutullah	Quirishi	UNCHS

Appendix 2: Number of Schools, Students and Teachers Represented by Participating Agencies

AGENCY	No. of Schools	No. of Students	% Who are Female	No. of Teachers	% Who are Female	EMIS	Software
GTZ-BEFAR	301	100000	28	260	25	Yes	Access
CARE International	280	19735	43	44	13	Yes	Foxpro
SCA	490	165000	23	540	13	Yes	Access
NAC		62392	33	327	37	Yes	Access
Oxfam	350 (classes)	9000	30	37	10	No	
PSD	10	4000	20	10	25	No [1]	
Save the Children	149 [2]	17000	34	46	25	No	
IRC-FEP	81 [3]	24000	75	90	80	Yes [4]	
UNCHS (Habitat)	51	10959	45	37	40	No	
UNDP/OPS	50	5000	35	8	15	No	
AGBAS-Ed	163	19795	40	52	0	Yes	Access
UNICEF	364 [5]	9000	66	36	40	No	
IRC	234 (classes)	5853	33	21	11	No	
AIL	10	3434	54	12	99	No	
Ockenden International	101	12233	45	38	30	No	

Notes:

1. Records are kept in EXCEL
2. 43 Formal, 58 Home-based and 48 NFE Centres
3. 37 Schools and 54 Home Schools
4. Records are kept in EXCEL and WORD
5. Home-based Schools

Appendix 3: EMIS TRAINING WORKSHOP – ISLAMABAD

DAY	SESSION	TIME	TOPIC
Monday 19th June	1	9-10.30am	• Introduction to EMIS concepts and training system software • Content and structure of data held in the training system and related security issues
		10.30-11am	Morning Tea
	2	11am-12.30	• How to add, modify and delete data held by the training system using: (i) form-based data entry; and (ii) importing data from spreadsheets and or other databases
		12.30-1.30pm	Lunch
	3	1.30-3pm	• Content of "standard" reports produced by the system, and how to run those reports. • Introduction to "simple" queries; what they are, how to specify, run and save them for later use in system reports, and for export to spreadsheets for statistical analysis.
		3-3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
	4	3.30-5pm	• Specification and running of "complex" queries.

EMIS TRAINING WORKSHOP – ISLAMABAD

DAY	SESSION	TIME	TOPIC
Tuesday 20th June	1	9-10.30am	• Writing non-standard and ad-hoc reports
		10.30-11am	Morning Tea
	2	11am-12.30	• Expansibility of the training system including adding new fields to existing tables and adding new tables to the database.
		12.30-1.30pm	Lunch
	3	1.30-3pm	• Introduction to the mapping (geographic information system – GIS) the mapping facility in the training system
		3-3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
	4	3.30-5pm	• Open discussion and reflection on the functions and facilities provided by the training system.

COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP FOR THE DESIGN OF AN EMIS FOR AFGHAN NGOs

DAY	SESSION	TIME	TOPIC
Wednesday 21 June	1	9-10.30am	• Discussion of a conceptual framework covering EMIS development • Specification of a minimum set of objectives for a core EMIS system • Discussion of a minimum set of indicators and identification of the data needed to compile them • Mapping the indicators onto the set of objectives
		10.30-11am	Morning Tea
	2	11-12.30	• Using the set of indicators as a guide identify the categories of data (eg. students, teachers, schools, classrooms, facilities, finance and so on) and the elements of those categories (eg age, sex, grade, assessment results, qualifications, experience, etc.) which must be collected by the system
		12.30-1.30pm	Lunch
	3	1.30-3pm	• Specify the relationships between data categories and elements and validation rules
		3-3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
	4	3.30-5pm	• Discuss and specify methods for the collection and input of data to the system, including medium, format, frequency, and responsibility

REPORT ON AN EMIS DESIGN WORKSHOP FOR UNICEF AND NGO PROVIDERS OF EDUCATION SERVICES IN AFGHANISTAN AND FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN:
ISLAMABAD, 18-21 JUNE, 2001

CATHY AND KEN VINE